

# MARINE MAMMALS OF HAWAI'I



Hawaiian Monk Seal  
*Monachus schauinslandi*



Fin Whale  
*Balaenoptera physalus*



Humpback Whale  
*Megaptera novaeangliae*



Cuvier's Beaked Whale  
*Ziphius cacirostris*



Blainville's Beaked Whale  
*Mesoplodon densirostris*



Melon-headed Whale  
*Peponocephala electra*



Sperm Whale  
*Physeter macrocephalus*



Pygmy Killer Whale  
*Feresa attenuata*



Rough-toothed Dolphin  
*Steno bredanensis*



Pygmy Sperm Whale  
*Kogia breviceps*



Dwarf Sperm Whale  
*Kogia sima*



Killer Whale  
*Orcinus orca*



Bottlenose Dolphin  
*Tursiops truncatus*



Striped Dolphin  
*Stenella coeruleoalba*



Spinner Dolphin  
*Stenella longirostris longirostris*



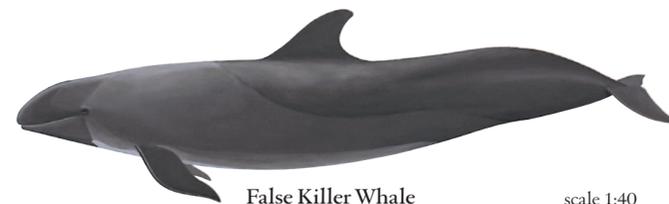
Pantropical Spotted Dolphin  
*Stenella attenuata*



Risso's Dolphin  
*Grampus griseus*



Short-finned Pilot Whale  
*Globicephala macrorhynchus*



False Killer Whale  
*Pseudorca crasidens*

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# MARINE MAMMALS OF HAWAII



## ORDER CARNIVORA (PINNIPEDIA)

### FAMILY PHOCIDAE

#### Hawaiian Monk Seal, *Monachus schauinslandi*

The Hawaiian monk seal may be named for its solitary nature, bald appearance and for the rolls of skin around its neck, similar to a monk's hood. This species is endemic to Hawai'i and the most endangered seal species in the U.S., with only an estimated 1,300–1,400 seals remaining. This seal is primarily found in the North-western Hawaiian Islands, however a relatively small number of seals live in the waters off the main Hawaiian Islands. Prey includes bottom-dwelling and reef fish, eels, octopus, squid and crustaceans.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 3' 4" (1 m) *Weight:* 35–40 lb (16–18 kg)  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* ♂ 6' 11" (2.1 m); ♀ 7' 10" (2.4 m)  
*Weight:* ♂ 510 lb (230 kg); ♀ 600 lb (270 kg)  
*Life span:* 20–30 years

## ORDER CETACEA SUBORDER MYSTICETI

### FAMILY BALAENOPTERIDAE

#### Fin Whale, *Balaenoptera physalus*

Known as the "greyhound of the oceans," the fin whale is a sleek, fast animal whose huge size is exceeded only by that of the blue whale. The fin whale is found in all oceans and seas of the world from tropical to polar latitudes, however they are rare in Hawaiian waters. Acoustic recordings suggest that fin whales migrate into Hawaiian waters mainly in the fall and winter. This species feeds on krill and various small schooling fish.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 19' 6"–21' (6–6.5 m) *Weight:* 4,000–6,000 lb (1,800–2,700 kg)  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* Northern Hemisphere 79' (24 m)  
Southern Hemisphere 89' (27.1 m); ♂ up to 6' 7" (2 m) shorter than ♀  
*Weight:* 260,000 lb (120,000 kg)  
*Life span:* At least 80 years

#### Humpback Whale, *Megaptera novaeangliae*

The humpback whale, best known for its acrobatic displays and its haunting songs, is found worldwide. Their long pectoral fins, the longest of any cetacean, give this whale its scientific name, which means "great wings of New England." Humpbacks are commonly sighted during the winter in Hawai'i where they breed, calf and nurse. They feed on krill and small schooling fish, such as capelin and herring, in colder waters.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 13–15' (4–4.6 m); *Weight:* About 1,500 lb (680 kg)  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* About 52–56' (16–17 m), ♂ slightly larger than ♀  
*Weight:* 90,000 lb (40,000 kg)  
*Life span:* At least 50 years

## SUBORDER ODONTOCETI

### FAMILY PHYSETERIDAE

#### Sperm Whale, *Physeter macrocephalus*

The sperm whale is the largest of the toothed whales. The name *macrocephalus* is derived from the Greek for "big head." Sperm whales inhabit ice-free marine waters worldwide. During the nineteenth century, the Hawaiian Islands marked the center of a major whaling ground for sperm whales. These whales were hunted for their body oil and spermaceti. The current population of sperm whales in Hawai'i is relatively unknown, possibly because of the large amount of time this species spends diving. Sperm whales have been sighted around some of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands as well as around the main Hawaiian Islands, but they are considered less common than many other species that are seen in Hawai'i. Sperm whales forage on or near the bottom of the ocean on such items as medium and large-sized squid, octopus, rays, sharks, and bony fish.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 13' (4 m) *Weight:* About 2,200 lb (1,000 kg)  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* ♂ 60' (18.3 m); ♀ More than 36' (11 m)  
*Weight:* ♂ 120,000 lb (57,000 kg); ♀ 55,000 lb (24,000 kg)  
*Life span:* 60–70 years

## FAMILY KOGIIDAE

#### Pygmy Sperm Whale, *Kogia breviceps*

Pygmy sperm whales are similar to sperm whales, however much smaller. They are found throughout the world in tropical and warm-temperate waters. Adults possess markings on their head that resemble gills, leading some to say they look like sharks. No abundance estimate is available for this species in Hawaiian waters, yet a few sightings have been made. Pygmy sperm whales commonly feed on cephalopods, crustaceans and fish.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 3' 11" (1.2 m) *Weight:* 51–55 lb (23–25 kg)  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* 11' 6" (3.5 m)  
*Weight:* 900 lb (410 kg)  
*Life span:* Unavailable

#### Dwarf Sperm Whale, *Kogia sima*

The dwarf sperm whale shares many of the same characteristics as the pygmy sperm whale. The difficulty of detecting and identifying it at sea, as well as its confusion with the pygmy sperm whale, may explain the lack of sightings in Hawai'i. Their diet is also similar to that of the pygmy sperm whale.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 3' 4" (1 m) *Weight:* Unavailable  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* 8' 10" (2.7 m)  
*Weight:* More than 460 lb (210 kg)  
*Life span:* Unavailable

## FAMILY ZIPHIIDAE

#### Cuvier's Beaked Whale, *Ziphius cacirostris*

Cuvier's beaked whales are found in all oceans and major seas, however these whales are rarely sighted in Hawai'i, possibly because of their deep-diving behavior. This whale has a short "beak" as compared to other whales within the same family (Ziphiidae). Little is known about the diet of this whale, however it is thought that they feed on open-ocean crustaceans and fish that occur well below the surface.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 8' 10" (2.7 m) *Weight:* about 550–660 lb (250–300 kg)  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* About 23' (7 m)  
*Weight:* ♂ At least 5,700 lb (2,600 kg); ♀ About 6,600 lb (3,000 kg)  
*Life span:* 40–60 years

#### Blainville's Beaked Whale, *Mesoplodon densirostris*

Sometimes referred to as the dense-beaked whale, the Blainville's beaked whale is found in most tropical and warm-temperate waters. It has been speculated that this species is more common in Hawai'i than anywhere else in the world. This species feeds on a diet of squid and occasionally fish.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 6' 7" (2 m) *Weight:* 132 lb (60 kg)  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* ♂ At least 14' 6" (4.4 m); ♀ At least 15' (4.6 m)  
*Weight:* ♂ More than 1,800 lb (800 kg); ♀ At least 2,200 lb (1,000 kg)  
*Life span:* Unavailable

## FAMILY DELPHINIDAE

#### Rough-toothed Dolphin, *Steno bredanensis*

The common name of this species refers to the rough texture and ridges of the teeth while the genus name *Steno* refers to the narrow snout of the animal. The rough-toothed dolphin is found in deep tropical and warm temperate waters throughout the world. It is a year-round resident of Hawai'i, where it can be found in near shore waters. A recent scientific survey revealed it is the most common dolphin species in the Hawaiian 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (including the Northwest Hawaiian Islands). Its diet primarily consists of fish and cephalopods.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 3' 4" (1 m) *Weight:* Unavailable  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* ♂ 8' 8" (2.65 m); ♀ 8' 4" (2.55 m)  
*Weight:* ♂ 350 lb (160 kg); ♀ Unavailable  
*Life span:* 32 years

#### Bottlenose Dolphin, *Tursiops truncatus*

The bottlenose dolphin, whose scientific name means "the cut-off face," is one of the most commonly known dolphins. This dolphin is found in the main Hawaiian Islands in both shallow inshore waters and deeper channels between the islands. This species is also found in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands mainly in shallow inshore waters. These dolphins eat a wide variety of foods, including fish, squid and crustaceans.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 33–55" (84–104 cm) *Weight:* 31–44 lb (14–20 kg)  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* ♂ 8'–12' 6" (2.45–3.8 m); ♀ 7' 10"–12' (2.4–3.7 m)  
*Weight:* ♂ 1100 lb (500 kg); ♀ 570 lb (260 kg)  
*Life span:* ♂ 40–45 years; ♀ At least 50 years

#### Spinner Dolphin, *Stenella longirostris longirostris*

The spinner dolphin is named for its unique habit of leaping out of the water and spinning in mid-air. This species tends to travel in large herds of between 10 and 100+ animals. In Hawaiian waters, spinner dolphins feed at night in the open ocean on organisms that rise to the surface such as small squid, lantern fish and small hake. Spinners are the most commonly seen near-shore dolphin and are found throughout the Hawaiian archipelago.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 30" (76–77 cm) *Weight:* Unavailable  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* ♂ 7' 9" (2.35 m); ♀ 6' 11" (2.11 m)  
*Weight:* ♂ 172 lb (78 kg); ♀ 143 lb (65 kg)  
*Life span:* At least 20 years

#### Striped Dolphin, *Stenella coeruleoalba*

The striped dolphin is named for the dark bluish-black stripe extending across the entire length of the dolphin's body. These dolphins are found in tropical to warm-temperate waters throughout the world. Striped dolphins feed on small fish and cephalopods. They take prey anywhere in the water column as long as they occur in dense schools. Sightings of striped dolphins are rare and the population of this species in Hawai'i is relatively unknown.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 32–37" (90–95 cm) *Weight:* 15–24 lb (7–11 kg)  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* ♂ 8' 8" (2.65 m); ♀ 7' 10" (2.4 m)  
*Weight:* ♂ 350 lb (160 kg); ♀ 330 lb (150 kg)  
*Life span:* 57–58 years

#### Pantropical Spotted Dolphin, *Stenella attenuata*

Pantropical spotted dolphins occur in all tropical to warm-temperate oceanic waters. One subspecies of this dolphin inhabits the near shore waters around Hawai'i. They feed on small pelagic fish, cephalopods and crustaceans on the surface of the water or in the water column. These dolphins, known as "leapers" by Hawaiian fishermen, and are both common and abundant throughout the Hawaiian archipelago.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 33" (85 cm) *Weight:* Unavailable  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* ♂ 8' 5" (2.57 m); ♀ 7' 10" (2.4 m)  
*Weight:* ♂ 260 lb (120 kg); ♀ Unavailable  
*Life span:* ♂ 40 years; ♀ 46 years

#### Short-finned Pilot Whale, *Globicephala macrorhynchus*

The short-finned pilot whale, also known as the "black fish," is found in all oceans and commonly around the Hawaiian Islands. The scientific name derives from the Latin *globus* for "globe," and the Greek *kephale* for "head," a clear reference to its bulbous shape. Scientists found that there are two distinct forms of this species, northern and southern Japan, that differ morphologically, as well as genetically. Short-finned pilot whales found in Hawaiian waters are similar to the southern Japan form and feed primarily on squid, and occasionally take octopus and fish.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* Northern Japan 6' 1" (1.85 m); Southern Japan 4' 7" (1.4 m)  
*Weight:* Northern Japan 183–185 lb (83–84 kg); Southern Japan 82–84 lb (37–38 kg)  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* ♂ Northern Japan 24' (7.2 m); ♀ Northern Japan 17' (5.1 m)  
Southern Japan 17' 6" (5.3 m); Southern Japan 13' 6" (4.1 m)  
*Weight:* Unavailable  
*Life span:* ♂ 46 years; ♀ 63 years

#### Killer Whale, *Orcinus orca*

Basque whalers referred to these animals as "whale killers" after witnessing their attacks on right whales. Translation to English made the name killer whales. It is the largest of the dolphin species. The killer whale has been observed in all oceans and seas of the world; however they are rare in Hawai'i. At the top of the oceanic food chain, killer whales feed on a wide variety of prey from fish to other marine mammals.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 7' 3"–8' 6" (2.2–2.6 m) *Weight:* About 250 lb (160 kg)  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* ♂ 30' (9 m); ♀ 26' (7.9 m)  
*Weight:* ♂ At least 12,000 lb (5,600 kg); ♀ At least 8,400 lb (3,800 kg)  
*Life span:* ♂ 50–60 years; ♀ 80–90 years

#### Melon-headed Whale, *Peponocephala electra*

Although its name is the melon-headed whale, the scientific name assigned to this species mistakenly translates to "pumpkin-headed whale." Not much is known about this widespread, tropical deep-water species that feeds entirely on pelagic fish, squid, and occasionally crustaceans in water up to 5,000 feet deep. The melon-headed whale is often seen around the Hawaiian Islands, especially in deeper waters.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* About 3' 4" (1 m) *Weight:* Less than 33 lb (15 kg)  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* ♂ 8' 8" (2.65 m); ♀ 9' (2.75 m)  
*Weight:* ♂ 460 lb (210 kg); ♀ At least 460 lb (210 kg)  
*Life span:* ♂ More than 22 years; ♀ More than 30 years

#### False Killer Whale, *Pseudorca crasidens*

The false killer whale is named for its resemblance to the killer whale. Unlike killer whales, however, they do not have white markings. They commonly occur around all of the main Hawaiian Islands. This dolphin is known to feed on a fairly large variety of fish and cephalopods. In Hawaiian waters, they often eat mahi mahi (dolphin fish) and yellowfin tuna. In some cases, false killer whales have been observed sharing large fish, which suggests cooperative feeding.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 5' 3"–6' 3" (1.6–1.9 m) *Weight:* Unavailable  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* ♂ 19' 6" (6 m); ♀ 16' 6" (5 m)  
*Weight:* ♂ At least 3,000 lbs (1360 kg); ♀ Unavailable  
*Life span:* ♂ 58 years; ♀ 63 years

#### Pygmy Killer Whale, *Feresa attenuata*

This dolphin is named for similarities to the killer whale, as well as the gradual narrowing of the animal's body from head to tail fin (*attenuata*). Not commonly seen, the pygmy killer whale is an oceanic species that does not normally enter shallow, near shore waters. Very little is known about the diet and feeding habits of this animal. Prey may consist of cephalopods and small fish.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 31" (80 cm) *Weight:* Unavailable  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* ♂ 8' 6" (2.6 m); ♀ At least 8' 2" (2.5 m)  
*Weight:* Unavailable  
*Life span:* Unavailable

#### Risso's Dolphin, *Grampus griseus*

This dolphin's scientific name refers to the size and coloring of the species, "large gray whale." Adult Risso's dolphins have a large bulbous head with a distinct furrow down the middle. They are found in tropical to warm-temperate waters worldwide, but are only occasionally sighted in Hawaiian waters. Risso's dolphins feed primarily on cephalopods, but also eat fish and crustaceans.

**Measurements at birth**  
*Length:* 3' 7"–4' 11" (1.1–1.5 m) *Weight:* Unavailable  
**Maximum measurements**  
*Length:* ♂ 12' 6" (3.83 m); ♀ 12' (3.66 m)  
*Weight:* Unavailable  
*Life span:* More than 30 years

key: ♂ male; ♀ female  
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